

Message Text

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ACTION OC-06

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6176

INFO AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

S E C R E T KUWAIT 0809

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ACOM

SUBJ: UNAUTHORIZED OPENING OF POUCHES

REF: STATE 47576

1. WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY SITUATION SURROUNDING OPENING OF POUCHES IN KUWAIT, AS MENTIONED REFTEL.

2. PRIOR TO ARRIVAL SUPPORT FLIGHT, WE ADVISED THAT APPROXIMATELY ONE AND A HALF TONS OF MATERIAL ABOARD FLIGHT DESTINED FOR KUWAIT. IN PAST CUSTOMS HAS GIVEN US DIFFICULT TIME WITH ALL MATERIAL IN BOXES, EVEN IF SEALED, AND WE KNEW THIS WOULD BE CASE IN THIS INSTANCE IN VIEW OF VOLUME OF SHIPMENT. KUWAITIS ALSO PRESENTLY VERY CONCERNED NOT RPT NOT TO PERMIT RADICAL ARAB STATES TO BEING IN LARGE CONSIGNMENTS WITHOUT INSPECTION, BEARING IN MIND RECENT EVENTS IN ISLAMABAD AND CURRENT MID- EAST SITUATION. WE THEREFORE APPROACHED FONMIN WHO DELEGATED PROBLEM TO UNDER SECRETARY RASHID AL- RASHID. RASHID AND AMBASSADOR ORALLY AGREED TO PRO FORMA INSPECTION (WITH NO BREAKING OF SEALS) SO GOK COULD APPLY SAME PRINCIPLE TO OTHERS. HOWEVER, TASHID ASSURED AMBASSADOR INSPECTION " WOULD CAUSE US NO DIFFICULTY."

3. FONMIN DESIGNATED SPECIAL OFFICER TO BE PRESENT AT ARRIVAL OF SHIPMENT AND ENSURE THAT GOODS IMMEDIATELY CLEARED. POUCHED ITEMS INCLUDING BOXES WERE DELIVERED TO APTHORIZED EMBASSY OFFICIAL AND SIGNED FOR. THEN, WHEN THEY WERE PRESENTED FOR " PRO FORMA" INSPECTION, CUSTOMS OFFICERS DEMANDED BOXES BE OPENED. SINCE EMBASSY UNDERSTOOD THAT ALL EQUIPMENT WAS UNCLASSIFIED AND URGENTLY NEEDED, WE AGREED TO OPEN ONE OR TWO BOXES TO SHOW WE
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HAD NOTHING TO HIDE. THEREAFTER ALL BOXES RELEASED FROM CUSTOMS.

4. AMBASSADOR SAW UNDER SECRETARY RASHID MARCH 15 AND PROTESTED ACTUAL OPENING OF BOXES. RASHID EXPRESSED REGRET THAT CLEARANCE HAD NOT GONE AS PLANNED, BUT SAID FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS NOT ABLE TO DICTATE TO CUSTOMS HOW THEY SHOULD PROCESS THESE SHIPMENTS. FURTHERMORE, GOK MOST ANXIOUS NOT RPT NOT TO ESTABLISH ANY POSSIBLE PRECEDENT AT THIS MOST SENSITIVE TIME THAT MIGHT ALLOW ANOTHER COUNTRY TO BRING IN WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED AGAINST SECURITY OF KUWAIT. RASHID ADDED THAT FONMIN, SABAH AL- AHMADHH TOLD HIM HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO AMERICAN EMBASSY BRINGING IN WHATEVER IT WANTED, SINCE HE WAS SURE IT WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE USED AGAINST KUWAIT. KUWAIT COULD NOT, HOWEVER, AFFORD TO TAKE A RISK WITH ITS BASIC SECURITY IN THIS WAY WITH CERTAIN OTHER STATES.

5. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF THE VERY SENSITIVE SITUATION EXISTING IN THE AREA, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT FOR AT LEAST THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE ALL DIPLOMATIC SHIPMENTS TO KUWAIT BE CONTAINED IN CLOTH BAGS WITH SEALS AND RESTRICTED IN SIZE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. SUCH BAGGED SHIPMENTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACCEPTABLE TO KUWAITI CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES AS " DIPLOMATIC POUCHES" AND ALLOWED IMMEDIATE FREE ENTRY.
STOLTZFUS

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